

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 1760

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP IR KE
SUBJ: GOI BREAKS RELATIONS WITH KENYA

REF NAIROBI 0379

1. FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATABRY ON FEBRUARY 18 ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOI HAS DECIDED TO SEVER ITS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH KANYA IN RESPONSE TO KENYA'S "UNWARRANTED" CRITICISM OF IRANIAN POLICY IN THE OGADEN CONFLICT. SPEAKING TO LOCAL AND FOREIGN REPORTERS, KHALATBARY WAS REPORTED IN FRENCH-LANGUAGE JOURNAL DE TEHRAN AS SAYING THAT THE KENYAN PRESS HAD BEEN "VIRULENTLY REPROACHING" IRAN AND CRITICIZING THE GOI SINCE THE SHAH'S NEW YEAR'S DAY STATEMENT.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, IN A SHARP ATTACK ON HIS KENYAN COUNTERPART, ADDED THAT THE GOI HAD ASKED THE KENYAN GOVERNMENT TO CLARIFY IRAN'S TRUE ROLE TO THE KENYAN PEOPLE BUT "WE HAVE SEEN WITH SURPRISE AND REGRET THAT THE KENYAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS HAS ECHOED THE SWAHILI PRESS AND HAS RE-
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PEATED ALLEGATIONS ALREADY MADE TOWARD OUR COUNTRY. THE MINISTER HAS CLAIMED THAT IRAN IS NOT AN AFRICAN STATE AND HAS NO RIGHT TO INTERFERE IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS. SURELY THE FOREIGN MINISTER MUST KNOW THAT A NUMBER OF 'FOREIGNERS' ARE ON AFRICAN SOIL AND THAT CUBANS AND OTHER FOREIGNERS ARE IN ACTUAL FACT PARTICIPATING IN THE FIGHTING. APPARENTLY THE MINISTER IS IGNORANT OF ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF

THE UN. ALL MEMBER STATES OF THE UN HAVE THE DUTY AND RIGHT TO EXPRESS THEIR CONCERN WHEN PEACE IS THREATENED IN ANY REGION AND TO DO ALL POSSIBLE TO MAINTAIN PEACE. IRAN, AS AN ACTIVE AND INITIAL MEMBER OF THAT ORGANIZATION, THUS HAS THE RIGHT AND DUTY TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PEACE WHEN IT IS THREATENED IN AFRICA. WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK FRANKLY: IRAN CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT IF THE INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED BORDERS OF SOMALIA ARE THREATENED."

3. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION RE FUTURE GOI ACTION, KHALATBARY ANSWERED, "THE IRANIAN DECISION WILL NOT BE REVEALED BEFORE AGGRESSION OCCURS." IN REJECTING KENYAN REPORTS OF IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE OGADEN, KHALATBARY REITERATED THAT GOI SUPPORT TO SOMALIA HAS CONSISTED ONLY OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES, DELIVERED BY THE GOI RED CROSS AFFILIATE.

4. COMMENT: DRAMATIC DIPLOMATIC BREAK (MOST RECENT SIMILAR ACTION WAS BREAK WITH CUBA IN 1976) EXEMPLIFIES GOI'S SENSITIVITY TO KENYAN CRITICISM OF SHAH'S PRONOUNCEMENT. AS EMPHASIZED IN REFTTEL, GOK HAS EXHIBITED HIGH EMOTIONAL LEVEL ON ISSUE OF SOMALIAN THREAT AND HAS STEPPED UP WAR OF WORDS WITH IAN. AMBASSADOR TAVAKOLI, IRAN'S ENVOY FOR PAST YEAR, HAS OBVIOUSLY BEEN UNABLE TO SMOOTH TROUBLED WATERS OR PUT DISPUTE INTO PROPER PERSPECTIVE AND HAS BEEN RECALLED BY GOI. BIRTH EMOFFS IN TEHRAN INFORM US GOI HAS ASKED HMG TO REPRESENT IRANIAN INTERESTS IN KENYA BUT REPORT NO CONFIDENTIAL

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DECISION TAKEN AS YET IN LONDON. POLCOUNS HAS APPOINTMENT AT MFA FEBRUARY 21 TO SEE WHAT BACKGROUND IRANIANS PROVIDE IN ADDITION TO KHALATBARY'S LENGTHY STATEMENT. SULLIVAN

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